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World Chronicle

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 1995

Mahbub ul HAQ, Special Adviser to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), elaborates on a number of issues vital to the advancement of women. In no society do women enjoy the same opportunities as men. Although women perform more than half of the economic work in the world, they own less than 1 per cent of the world's property and earn less than 10 per cent of the world's income. The human development paradigm must be fully engendered. Many of women's economic contributions are grossly undervalued or not valued at all. Mr. Haq believes that while doors to education and health opportunities have opened rapidly for women, the doors to economic and political opportunities are barely ajar in most countries of the world. He believes that religion and culture, although often distorted and used to deny advancement to women, do not present real barriers.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

One of the defining movements of the 20th century has been the relentless struggle for gender equality, led mostly by women, but supported by growing numbers of men. When this struggle finally succeeds, it will mark a great milestone in human progress. And along the way it will change most of today's premises for social, economic and political life.

This is the theme of the 1995 Human Development Report recently published by the United Nations Development Programme, or UNDP. With us today is the principal coordinator and chief architect of the Report, Mahbub ul Haq, Special Adviser to the Administrator of UNDP. Joining me to talk with Mr. Haq are Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service and Evelyn Leopold of Reuters.

Mr. Haq, welcome to **World Chronicle**.

HAQ: Thank you.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Haq, I wonder if you could explain to us the significance of the square on the cover of the Human Development Report and what the divisions in the square mean.

HAQ: Well, I think this cover picture illustrates one of the greatest scandals of our time. This is the total economic work of the world; this is the work that presently appears in national income accounts, which is paid for; and this is the work which is not paid, not valued, not recognized. This is the work of women, and this is the work of men. What it shows is that more than half of the economic work of the world is done by women, but only very little of it is paid in the market. Three-fourths of the men's work is paid for. So they get most of the income and most of the recognition. This is unpaid work: $11 trillion of women's work that never gets valued.

Now, the point is not that everything must be paid for, that family life should be commercialized, that community activities must carry a financial value. The point is this: Why is it that after doing more than half of the work of the world women own less than 1 per cent of the total property? They get less than 10 per cent of the total economic bank loans because they're not regarded as credit-worthy. And in divorce settlements, they're at the mercy of husbands. It is an act of benevolence, what they get, rather than an act of entitlement. And what we have suggested in this Report is that all the laws which govern economic transactions will have to change if we prepare proper national income accounts which give the right value to women's work, which has not been done yet.

LITTLEJOHNS: And how do you think this is going to be achieved?

HAQ: First of all, we hope that, in line with the recommendations of the Beijing Conference --

LITTLEJOHNS: The Women's Conference.

HAQ: -- the Women's Conference, there will be preparation of what's called satellite accounts, separate accounts, bringing out what is the contribution being made by both men and women to the national income. Second, we hope that this will be translated into the laws of the countries, particularly regarding property ownership. There are laws today in many parts of the world, which are quoted in this Report, saying that, by law, women cannot manage property, whereas the law should be that they should be co-owners of property. Similarly, take bank loans. In Africa, women are responsible for producing 90 per cent of the food. They do a lot of work in agriculture, everybody recognizes it.

LITTLEJOHNS: And it's unpaid work?

HAQ: It is unpaid work, and what is more, when it comes to signing for those loans that are given, only 1 per cent of the loans are signed for by women. Men must sign it, even if they are sitting at home drinking beer. And this is done by World Bank, by the UN, by international donors, as well as national governments. Because it is suggested that women are not credit-worthy.

LITTLEJOHNS: So the United Nations system is not setting a very good example. These are the financial institutions of the UN.

HAQ: I think all of us are not setting a good example, whether domestically or internationally. I think we have disenfranchised women economically for a long time. And this is the way we have not given them economic empowerment that they must have. I think if the logic of our Report and our estimate is followed, this will be the major, significant movement toward empowering women in the economic field.

DEEN: Dr. Haq, if I remember right, some time ago you had proposed that the UN should set up a special agency for the advancement of women. You said there's an agency to handle population, there's an agency to look after children, and you said this was a very big shortcoming in the United Nations system. But what do you think of this proposal? Do you think the UN should take this seriously?

HAQ: I have always believed that women's concerns are so important that they do deserve recognition in the UN at the highest level. There should be an agency whose head is an under-secretary-general who is in the inner cabinet of the Secretary-General, so that the issues that we took up in the Women's Conference in Beijing, and which we take up every 10 years, should be taken up every day and every week and every year. Why is it we can't remind the world every day that the convention regarding equality of women -- which is called the CEDAW convention [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women], which was, after all, accepted in 1979 -- has not been ratified by half the Member States of the United Nations? Ninety nations haven't done it, including the United States. Why do we discover it every 10 years, when we assemble in international conferences? Why is it that we cannot remind the world every day that they do need to prepare better national income accounts, or satellite accounts, to recognize the contribution of women? Why can't we change the laws regarding collateral for bank loans, or property ownership? These need real policy breakthroughs. They are not small operational programmes in education and health which may be mainstreamed in all agencies, but somebody has to speak up for women every day, at the highest level -- a good woman leader.

DEEN: But hasn't there been resistance to this proposal in the UN system?

HAQ: Oh, there's tremendous resistance, because it is felt that maybe it will diminish the importance of the existing agencies, like UNIFEM and INSTRAW and others, whereas I believe that it will strengthen them, that it will be an umbrella that will help all other agencies. And, in any case, it will be a policy agency, not a programme or operational agency. But there has been a good deal of resistance, whether this will marginalize women's concerns, or will it really highlight women's concerns? I definitely believe that we need, in the inner sanctums of the UN, at the highest level in the inner cabinets of the Secretary-General, a woman leader who can run such an agency, who can give support to these issues all the time and keep reminding the world that things must be implemented which have emerged out of women's conferences.

LEOPOLD: Your Report highlighted the disparities between men and women in every country, and the countries that had the least and who came out on top were the Scandinavian countries, followed by Canada, New Zealand and the Netherlands, with the United States only in eighth place. And you said that you believed the reason for this was affirmative action and hardly anything else. Can you elaborate on that?

HAQ: I think what is interesting is when we prepared these indices of gender equality, we also prepared them over time, from 1970 to 1992, and the United States was topping the list on gender equality in 1970, not the Scandinavian countries. It is only over the last 22 years, since really our data finishes in 1992, that Nordic countries have come to the top. And how have they done it? Through very definite affirmative action. They invest in their women -- education, health, nutrition; they fix quotas in civil service, even in political parties. And over this period they are the only countries in which now about 40 per cent of the parliament consists of women. In Sweden, 50 per cent of the cabinet is women. In terms of top managers, administrators, in terms of participation in all walks of life, women have come up. Whereas in the United States, women are less than 8 per cent of the parliament, very limited role in cabinets, very limited role among top multinationals, what we call chief

executive officers. And I think affirmative action, which is not too much at a premium these days, has been really responsible for the tremendous progress made in a short period of time by the Nordic countries.

I personally believe that when power structures are all stacked up against you, then you do need a countervailing power, you do need state at that time to intervene intelligently and to see that those opportunities are opened up for the weak and the vulnerable which would be denied to them by the existing power structures. And just to say, no, let the market take care of it, let existing power structures decide, is really to condemn the weak and the vulnerable to the mercies of the existing power structures.

LEOPOLD: At the same time, though, it seems to me that part of the real problem, when one listens to the affirmative action debate in the United States, whether it is for minority groups or for women, is that a lot of people are scrambling after a few jobs, and that the issue is really that there's a scarcity of jobs in certain fields, and therefore the people who don't get them, white males, come up with this resentment. Have you found that in your study? In the industrial countries, not just in the United States.

HAQ: Let me review the women's issue in a little historical perspective. Over the last few decades, women have done a lot in building up their capabilities, and their societies have done a lot. When we take education, health and nutrition, our Report suggests that the gender gaps have more than halved over the last three decades, and not only in rich nations, in poor nations, in some of the most conservative societies. In fact, the fastest rate of increase in female education has come in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates during the last 30 years.

So, in that way, women have acquired a lot of capabilities. But then comes the next conclusion, that doors to economic and political opportunities are not yet open, are opening very reluctantly, both in rich and poor nations. On one thing I think all members of the international community seem to be united -- how to discriminate against their women. It's not a matter of income. In Japan or the US it is done just as much as it is done, say, in Pakistan, my country, or in Mali or in Brazil.

What is evidence for that? After all this increase in education, where female literacy has increased by two-thirds over the last 30 years, do you know where they stand on employment opportunities? They have gone up by only 4 percentage points. Where do they stand on parliament representation? It's still less than one-tenth of the parliaments of the world. Where do they stand in the cabinets? Less than 6 per cent representation. And where is the glass ceiling? Among top managers, administrators, they're still less than 14 per cent in the world.

That means the next doors to economic and political opportunities are opening very reluctantly; it still happens to be a man's world. And unless there is some form of affirmative action, unless there is a very conscious policy, these doors may not open very widely. This is what the Nordic countries have demonstrated. This doesn't have to be done forever. These are not permanent crutches. That is what opponents of affirmative action say. But why not do it for some time, to open up these doors?

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**, our guest is Mahbub ul Haq, Special Advisor to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

DEEN: Dr. Haq, in south Asia there is a theory that religion and culture militate against the advancement of women. And I remember you mentioned, specifically on Islam, you said that there is nothing in the Koran to say that the ruler of Saudi Arabia should be a man. Do you subscribe to the view that culture and religion militate against the advancement of women?

HAQ: I think religion and culture are used conveniently by those who wish to deny opportunities to women. I know of no religion that suggests that women must be beaten up regularly, as a religious duty, every night. I know of no religion that suggests that girls should not be given education, only the boys. In fact, I know of no religion that puts any barriers in the way of education, health, or economic or political opportunities for women. These are more practices which have emerged, and then we defend them, unfortunately, in the name of religion. Religion, the essence of it, as we have seen -- and we surveyed all in connection with our Report, and consulted many religious scholars -- religions stand for morality, for equality, for justice. That's the essence of religions. To distort them and to hold them up for injustice against women is, I think, the greatest injustice to our own religions and to our own cultures.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Haq, do you think that women themselves have been militant enough to establish their rights that you've talked about?

HAQ: I think women have done a lot to advance the cause, but what really pleases me a lot more is that a growing number of men are joining the cause of gender equality. I think they're really realizing it's not a zero sum game, that gains for women are not losses for men. They're realizing that those societies which have more gender equality have grown faster, have more employment opportunity, have made more progress than those which deny gender equality in their midst. So, as such, I think in terms of historical development we have now more and more voices being raised in favour of gender equality as a functional issue, not only as a question of --

LITTLEJOHNS: A moral or social issue.

HAQ: A moral or social issue. Secondly, if we look at it, history is on the side of gender equality. Previously, the first industrial revolution, after that, jobs depended on

manual strength, industrial jobs required a good deal of hard work. Now, technology has made jobs depend on skills. These are computerized jobs. There is a communication breakthrough. There are different types of opportunities. And women are better on these skills and on the discipline. History's on their side, and technology is on their side, and so is democracy. Because now politicians realize that more than half the world is controlled by women, and whether they stand in elections or not, their concerns are there to be looked after. So my feeling is the 21st century is going to be a century of real gender equality, unprecedented progress. I say sometimes lightly that the end of the 21st century I envisage there will be a demand by men to have a conference, the first conference on men's rights.

[LAUGHTER]

But at that time, the Secretary-General of the UN will be a woman.

LITTLEJOHNS: Will be a woman!

HAQ: And it will be interesting to see whether she accommodates that request or not.

LITTLEJOHNS: Well, surely, surely we don't have to wait until the end of the 21st century for a woman Secretary-General!

HAQ: It will come much earlier.

LEOPOLD: Well, there was only one woman candidate in the last election, and she got the least votes, so I'm not sure if this is....

DEEN: Dr. Haq, with all this talk about the advancement of women in the west, why is it that the world's three women prime ministers have come from Asia, from south Asia?

HAQ: Well, as we know --

LITTLEJOHNS: And one from another Asian country, Israel, namely, Golda Meir.

DEEN: Right, exactly.

HAQ: I think in south Asia a good deal of it has been linked with a family heritage, what is called dynastic politics. Of course, that's not taking away from the tremendous struggle that these women leaders have put up in terms of getting their rights recognized. I believe in all our societies in south Asia in particular the politics are in the hands of the elite, not in the hands of the people. So while we can take great pride that some of our leaders have been women, I think ultimately we cannot take the pride that our leaders have emerged from the ranks as a part of a long political process. I think we still have to wait for that day, and we have to wait for that day in many other societies as well.

LITTLEJOHNS: Evelyn, you must have a little gender equality, I think.

[LAUGHTER]

Go ahead.

LEOPOLD: In your Report you've got two indexes, your main index that you've had every year, which doesn't have gender equality in it, and another one that has gender equality.

Are you ever going to merge them, so that your own Report will reflect in the mainstream of your charts the gender equality?

HAQ: Let me say first of all that our gender equality indices -- both what we call GDR, which measures capabilities, and what we call GEM, which measures opportunities -- that both these gender indices will be continued in every Report. They will not disappear just because -- whether a women's conference is held or not. We have taken the view that human development, if not engendered, is fatally endangered, and, in line with that, we'll continue this dialogue. And what it does is it immediately points out that if we were not conscious of gender, a society may be topping the list in the Human Development Index, as Canada does, but when you take gender into view Canada drops nine ranks; when you take gender into view Japan drops about 20 ranks. It immediately brings into focus what needs to be done in order to see that those opportunities are open, not only to some in society, but all. That if half the society is not participating in those opportunities, then the societies need to be punished in the ranking. And it also brings out where they are behind -- in education or health or in parliament participation, or in economic opportunities -- so immediately the policy-makers can see where the next major step should come in order to equalize opportunities.

LEOPOLD: Do you think in the industrial countries there will ever be enough jobs for reasonably full employment, which of course is then a much better situation for women and minorities, or do men and women have to share jobs? I mean, how do you see that trend, as an economist?

HAQ: I think that men and women may have to share jobs. My own impression of the 21st century is that technology, while widening opportunities, is also going to eliminate manual labour; that we are going to be able to earn a lot of income with much fewer hours; that there's no divine law that says we must work five days. We started with seven days a week and came down to five. We may go down to a four- or a three-day week, and to more limited hours. And similarly there's no divine law that says men should work in the market and women at home. I envision a society where they'll be taking turns. Men may be working in the mornings, and women the afternoon, or vice versa, but they'll be sharing these jobs. I think we can see the pattern already emerging in Nordic countries. Men are given paternity leaves now. Nearly half the men are availing themselves of it, for the first two to three years, till the child grows up, and men are also being allowed, or actually both spouses, to curtail their hours of work by two hours in order to look after family commitments. And I see this as the way of the future, where both the family obligations and market opportunities will be shared, and it will not be stereotyped such that it has to be done by one spouse or the other.

LITTLEJOHNS: Should wives and mothers receive some kind of salary for work in the home, do you think?

HAQ: I think that would be a bit of a disaster. And this is the issue that keeps coming up whenever we ask for separate accounts measuring the value of women's work: Will wives have to be paid for? Will there be Social Security legislation separately for them? Will everything be commercialized? I think that's a red herring. Basically, we cannot put a value on things which are priceless. How do you put a price on the value of a mother's love for a child? Because it's not only child-rearing -- which can be entrusted to a daycare centre or to a nanny, and you can measure as to what it will cost you otherwise; there is also a lot more that goes into it -- the whole value system that passes on from one generation to another. So I don't think it's a pricing question. It's a question of recognition. It's a question of justice. It is really a scandal, as I said in the beginning, that after all the work women do they should have less than 1 per cent ownership of the property of the world. Why not make them co-owners of property, and work that is done in the offices is a joint product, not a solo effort? Let's say husbands are able to do it because wives are looking after children at home. So the payment that is being made for that work should be a payment for the work of both, not the work only of one. It's the recognition of that and the translation of that into laws which govern economic transactions.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Haq, this Human Development Report is an annual event. What are you working on for the next issue?

HAQ: Our next issue will link up economic growth with human development. We'll try to see why it is that in some societies growth has translated into people's lives and in others it hasn't. What is it that enables societies to link economic growth with human development? I think we'll build a bridge finally between the World Bank and the UN. There can't be two models of development. Ultimately there must be a single, integrated model of development that we should put before the policy-makers. And I'm really excited that the World Bank is working very closely with us on the next report and trying to get that integrated development model for the countries.

LEOPOLD: How do you think the two models differ, between the Bank and the UN?

HAQ: Well, in the case of the Bank, as you know, economic growth is the main subject, and whatever goes into that economic growth. We try to see who participates in growth, who benefits from it. Does it translate into people's lives? Does it enrich those lives? So we go a step further. I think the World Bank has realized that. In the latest study that they have now produced on the wealth of nations, they have said two-thirds of the capital of the world is human and social, and only one-seventh man-made capital.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Haq, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**. Our guest has been Mahbub ul Haq, Special Advisor to

the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. He was interviewed by Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service and Evelyn Leopold of Reuters.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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